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DS/OSAC AND DS/IP/AF

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ASEC](#) [AMGT](#) [APER](#)

SUBJECT: ANNUAL OVERSEAS SECURITY ADVISORY COUNCIL (OSAC) CRIME AND SAFETY REPORT FOR REPUBLIC OF CONGO-BRAZZAVILLE

REF: 2008 STATE 132056

I. Overall Crime and Safety Situation:

A. Crime Threats: In the Republic of Congo (ROC) major crimes against foreigners is rare, however muggings and pickpocketings do occur in the capital city of Brazzaville and in the port city of Point Noire. Criminal elements are known to target middle-class and affluent neighborhoods without 24-hour guards. Care should be taken at night and in areas where street children congregate. Roadblocks manned by armed groups are common on the route traveling south of Brazzaville through the Pool region. Travelers should note that in the case of theft and robbery legal recourse is limited, therefore, they may wish to leave all valuable items at home.

B. Safety: Most roads within the cities of Brazzaville and Point Noire are in need of major repair. Potholes are a very common and serious hazard. An even greater hazard are the taxi and minibus drivers who swerve erratically to avoid potholes or to pick-up fares. Emission controls and traffic laws are not enforced, creating polluted and congested road conditions.

II. Political Violence:

A. Historical Perspective: The last bout of fighting in the Congo Civil Wars broke out in March 2002 when rebel groups launched attacks first in the Pool region and later in Brazzaville. The fighting was quickly contained in Brazzaville, however "Ninja" rebels continued to resist in the Pool region. In March 2003, the ROC government signed a cease-fire accord, which remains in effect today. Efforts to integrate the ex-combatants into mainstream society continue, however the process has been slow and rebels have been reluctant to disarm.

B. Regional Terrorism and Organized Crime: There are no known groups operating in ROC.

C. International Terrorism or Transnational Terrorism: There are no known groups operating in ROC.

D. Civil Unrest: Civil unrest is rare in ROC, however rallies and demonstrations do occur during election periods and are occasionally marred by violence. Travelers should avoid political rallies and street demonstrations. Presidential elections are scheduled for July 2009.

III. Post Specific Concerns:

A. Floods: Heavy rains and floods occur during the rainy seasons of October-December and March-May.

B. Industrial and Transportation Accidents: Two Antonov aircraft accidents in 2005 resulting in loss of life, and a third in neighboring DRC in 2007, have caused the suspension of Antonov passenger flight operations in the ROC.

C. Kidnappings: Kidnapping for criminal profit is not a known practice in ROC.

D. Drugs and Narco-Terrorism: Drug abuse is reportedly common in poor neighborhoods, however evidence of drug trade is not readily apparent to travelers in Brazzaville and Point Noire.

IV. Police Response:

1A. Incidents of Police Detention or Harassment: Travelers complain that border police and traffic police arbitrarily delay them to check documents, with the officers often warning that there is a problem and demanding a fine be paid. Travelers should abide by orders from public officials, but are advised to courteously request to speak with a supervisor and to contact their embassy if they feel they are being threatened or are in violation of a law.

1B. Police Contact Numbers: Police resources are limited and response to emergency calls is often slow.
Brazzaville- 516 89 89 or 815 387
Point Noire- 558 46 18 or 596 07 70

1V. Medical Emergencies:

1A. Contact Information for Local Hospitals and Clinics: Medical facilities are extremely limited. Some medicines are in short supply, particularly outside the larger cities. Travelers should carry their own supply of appropriately labeled medications. Travelers to ROC are at a high risk for contracting malaria. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) advise that travelers should take one of the following antimalarial drugs: Mefloquine, Doxycycline, or Atovaquone/Proguanil; as well as other protective measures to prevent insect bites, such as the use of insect repellent. In February 2003, the Department of State issued a Public Announcement stating that there had been a number of deaths in the remote border area between northeastern Gabon and ROC due to an outbreak of Ebola Hemorrhagic Fever. This was the third such outbreak since December 2001. No vaccine or antiviral medication is available for treatment of Ebola. Travelers are advised to consult with their physician, the CDC or other health professionals regarding immunizations and other precautions or concerns before traveling to ROC.
CHU General Hospital- Plateau de Quinze Ans, Centreville, Brazzaville (switchboard not operational)
Netcare Clinic- 661 52 53 or 666 69 11
COGEMO Clinic- 563 79 68

1B. Air Ambulance Services: AMREF Flying Doctors based out of Wilson Airport in Nairobi, Kenya.
Tel: (254 20) 315454, 315455, 600090, 600602
Mobile: +254 733-628-422, +254 733-639-088
Satellite Phone: +873 762315580

VI. Travel Precautions:

1A. Crimes Unique or Frequent in Region: Crime in Brazzaville and Point Noire is typical of many large cities in Sub-Saharan Africa. There are large pockets of very poor living adjacent to the very wealthy. Most crimes are crimes of opportunity or against residences without guard services. Pickpocketing, muggings and aggressive street persons are the most common threat. There has been an increase in incidents with aggressive street kids in Brazzaville. In Point Noire there was a reported incident of drink tampering targeting a foreign traveler in a local nightclub and an armed robbery of an AMCIT on the beach. Few thefts are reported from the hotels in the larger cities of ROC and most employ security on the premises, however precautions should be taken to protect valuables.

1B. Best Security Practices: Travelers should maintain awareness of their surroundings at all times. Keep doors and windows closed and locked when traveling in vehicles. Avoid walking alone at night. Photographs of government buildings and military installations should not be taken without permission. Photographs of national forests, parks, ports, infrastructure, etc. may be taken with permission from the appropriate ministry or authority. When photographing persons, especially police and military, it is best to request permission. If permission is refused, the photo should not be taken. There are no travel restrictions imposed in ROC, however caution is urged when traveling through the Pool region as there are reports of frequent roadblocks and robberies by armed groups.

VII. Embassy Contacts:

Embassy switchboard is manned 24-hours. From the U.S. dial prefix 011. Local calls omit 242 country code.
Switchboard: 242 811 481 or 242 811 480
Regional Security Officer (RSO): 242 526 3556

American Citizen Services: 242 811 481
Duty Officer: 242 526 3562

The U.S. Embassy is currently located in the BDEAC building in Brazzaville. The new embassy is scheduled to open in January 2009 and is located on Maya Maya Avenue near the airport.

VII. OSAC Country Council:

At present, there is no OSAC Country Council in the Republic of Congo.

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